

# Norms, Identity Change and EU Enlargement: Present and Future

Theodor Tudoroiu\*

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*This paper analyses the European Union (EU) - Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) interaction in a perspective regarding identity as a set of constitutive norms, which are in close relation to "simple", regulative norms. On one hand, after the Cold War the EU found itself in a tortuous identity-transformation process (well illustrated by the present Constitution debate). The 1989 CEE, on the other, started in a power, ideology, and identity vacuum. Still, countries in the former communist camp able to conclude European Agreements escaped Yugoslav and post-Soviet instability. They are now part of EU (and NATO).*

*Stability seems to be the key. But its explanation is not a simple, political/strategic one. I claim stability was maintained due to a security regime within which Western values and norms were imported and contributed to changing the CEE identities. In other words, EU's own constitutive norms were transmitted to CEE through the intermediate of regulative norms this regime helped generalize.*

*The paper also examines the possibility that EU applies the same pattern to other targets: Western Balkans, Commonwealth of Independent States, and Turkey. It is argued that the determinant factor is both EU's and those countries' capacity to turn EU regulative norms into constitutive norms; that is, to create EU identities.*

**Key words:** European Union, EU enlargement, Central and Eastern Europe

## 1. Introduction

During the last 15 years, one of the major problems confronting the European Union (EU) concerned its symbiotic relation with Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). This paper analyzes the EU-CEE interaction in a perspective that considers identity as a set of constitutive norms, which are in close relation with "simple", regulative norms. It is argued that CEE's evolution from post-1989 identity vacuum to THE EU membership is a direct consequence of the transmission of EU's own constitutive norms through the intermediation of regulative norms generalized in the framework of a CEE security regime.

First, the theoretical link between constitutive and regulative norms is explored. Then, three key elements of any analysis concerning the CEE-EU relation are identified. This is followed by a presentation

of the two components of the norms transfer process: the Western genesis of norms and their Eastern assimilation. Finally, Wendt's "three cultures of anarchy" are used to explain CEE's evolution and to evaluate the possibility of further EU enlargement.

## 2. Identity and Norms seen as Constitutive and Regulative Norms

The theoretical approach I intend to adopt in this paper is a Wendt-inspired branch of constructivism emphasizing precisely "the power of identity" (Hassenclever et al. 1997: 167). In fact, as suggested by the title of the chapter signed by Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996) - "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security" - constructivism in general closely associates identity and norms. This is done in a context where "culture" is perceived as "a set of (...) standards (...) defining what entities and actors exist in a system and how they operate and interrelate" (p. 56). Following these same authors, "the concept of

\*Notice about the author: Theodor Tudoroiu has a MA of the College of Europe, Bruges, Belgium, and is currently writing a Ph.D. thesis on Central and Eastern European security in the Political Science department of the Université de Montréal. His previous publications are related to European and Balkan security and European integration.



'identity' thus functions as a crucial link between environmental structures and interests" (p. 59).

Towards the middle of the 90s, this essential role was demonstrated by important empirical research. The analysis of the end of South African apartheid, performed by Audie Klotz (1995), the one dedicated by Koslowski and Kratochwil to the end of the Soviet empire (1994) and the empirical studies of the book edited by Katzenstein (1996) (the most important probably being Risse-Kappen's view of NATO as a security community) demonstrated that "international politics is not an autonomous sphere but always part of a larger endeavor, that is, of institutionalizing both identities and political communities as well as their interactions" (Koslowski et Kratochwil 1994: 247).

Still, in most of these analyses the norms-identity relation is unbalanced, attributing to the latter a rather secondary role: it creates the link between "environmental structures" and "interests" by modifying itself under the influence of international norms; but it can not directly influence these norms. The CEE case is different, as the identity change was paralleled by a transformation of the very nature of intra-regional relations. This is the reason why I am using Wendt's approach.

In this view, state-society complexes change their identities due to a process of social learning allowing them to accommodate international factors. This change, in turn, modifies the international milieu and the nature of relations between the respective states. Therefore, one can speak about a balanced norms-identity relation.

For Wendt there are four forms of identity: personal (or, for organizations, corporative), type, role and collective. Every actor (individual/state) can have only one personal/corporative identity. It is a kind of platform for the other forms, which are multiple: "We all have many, many identities, and this is no less true of states. Each is a script or schema, constituted to varying degrees by cultural forms, about who we are and what we should do in a certain context" (Wendt 1999: 230). These identities are constituted of structures that are interior ("identity is at base a subjective or unit-level quality, rooted in an actor's self-understanding", p. 224) and exterior (following the logic of self-other relation).

It is interesting that, on one hand, the preeminence of interior structures is acknowledged: «States (individuals) are ontologically prior to the states system (society)" (p. 244). But, on other hand, "The fact that states' bodies are constituted by internal structures in no way precludes them forming identities and interests by interacting with each other" (p. 245). In fact, this interaction constitutes the principal engine of identity change, a process that Wendt examines in detail in the first chapter of his book.

With regard to definitions, this author describes the identity of a state-society complex as "relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations

about self" (Wendt 1992: 397). In other words, identity is "a property of international actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions" (Wendt 1999: 224). One could notice that this perspective is quite close to that putting in relation identity and norms: "In much the same way that Wendt has distinguished between structure and agent in international relations theory, we will distinguish between *norms* as the regulative cultural content of international politics and *identities* - regulative accounts of actors themselves" (Kowert et Legro 1996: 453). Approaching norms as "*regulative norms*" and identities as "*constitutive norms*" provides a better understanding of their relation: "One would expect the regulative norms (...) to reflect the constitutive norms that shape the collective identity of the security community" (Risse-Kappen 1996: 368). As both identities and norms are "normative structures" that, through the intermediation of interests and policies, determine the states' behavior (Kowert et Legro 1996: 462), it is by the study of this behavior that identity change may be evaluated.

The next sections will introduce a security regime. With regard to this subject, "Wendt (...) discusses the identity problematic as one of whether and under which conditions identities are more collective or more egoistic. Depending on where states fall on this continuum from positive to negative identification with other states, they will be more or less willing to engage in collective security practices" (Zehfuss 2002: 40). Therefore, this approach provides the means to analyze both the identity change I consider essential for CEE and the instruments that helped produce this change.

### 3. The Three Key Elements of CEE-EU Analysis

I have already mentioned the important role of CEE in EU's debates. Reciprocally, for the Eastern half of the European continent the relation with the EU is essential. One can even say that, in CEE context, "success" might well be related to a country's admission to EU. From this point of view, there are eight "successful" countries - the Visegrad 4, the three Baltic States, and Slovenia - and two "almost successful" - Bulgaria and Romania (already members of NATO but relegated to a second wave of the EU enlargement). On the other hand, the Western Balkans and the CIS republics are clearly "unsuccessful".

In my view, any analysis of this differentiation has to take into consideration three closely inter-related elements: identity change, stability and the existence of a special relation with EU.

#### Identity change

The fall of communism created not only an ideological, but also an identity vacuum in the former Soviet block. The previous system of values was



completely bankrupt; post-communist state-society complexes needed to forge new identities.

Of course, all ex-communist countries progressively acquired new identities, as none of them could stay communist. But the direction of this change was essential: it was only a Western-inspired, democratic identity change which led to the above-mentioned "success". The EU admission was the final stage of a trajectory marked by the assimilation of the Western system of values. A quantitative proof of this statement will be presented later in the paper.

### **Stability**

In 1989, Yugoslavia seemed to be in the best position to join EU: the burden of its communist past was by far the lightest. Its relations with the West in general and the European Community in particular were excellent and had been so for a long time. But political and military instability ruined any hope of pro-Western evolution. From the siege of Vukovar to the war in Kosovo, a decade was spent - and lost - in warfare.

Stability, then, is another key element. But its explanation cannot be a simple, political/strategic one. Yugoslav wars were possible because post-communist vacuum was filled by nationalist ideologies. Nationalism was also present in many former Soviet republics where it was often accompanied by different forms of authoritarian post-or even neo-communism.

Proliferation of non-democratic systems of values generated political and military instability. On the contrary, there was no military tension in the area progressively dominated by the Western system of values. Democratic identity change was closely associated to regional stability.

This affirmation might seem incomplete, as the latter link has no obvious explanation. I claim that democratic identity change and regional stability are related due to an intermediate variable: an informal

CEE security regime, covering the ten "successful" and "almost successful" countries and whose institutional structure was based on the CSCE/OSCE, EU's Europe Agreements and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP).

It is through this regime that Western values and norms were imported and contributed to changing CEE identities. In other words, EU's own constitutive norms were transmitted to CEE through the intermediation of regulative norms this regime helped generalize.

### **Special relation with EU**

It is generally accepted that the EU - and particularly, at least in the first phase, its Europe Agreements - had a tremendous influence on CEE's overall transformation. Table 1 illustrates the many instruments employed in this process.

Still, two points have to be made. First, specific actions and instruments are secondary in comparison to the transfer of values and norms from the EU to CEE. It is the success of this transfer - and the subsequent identity change of CEE countries - that made possible the creation and the efficiency of those instruments. If the value transfer does not work - which is the case in Turkey, for example - the overall relation is unsatisfactory and the EU actions and instruments remain modest and rather inefficient.

Second, the importance of the value transfer makes illogical the separation of the EU from other organizations accomplishing the same mission. I consider the most important such organizations are the other components of the CEE security regime: CSCE/OSCE and NATO's PfP. They played a major role in CEE's identity change process and their actions in this domain were convergent with those of EU. Therefore, instead of exclusively speaking of EU's influence on CEE I will concentrate on the global effect of the security regime on CEE state-society complexes.

**Table 1 EU-CEE relations (Demetropoulou 2002: 93)**

<b>First Step</b>	Europe Agreements			
<b>Second Step</b>	Copenhagen criteria			
<b>Third Step</b>	Essen Pre-accession Strategy	Europe Agreements		
		PHARE Programmes		
		White Paper		
		Structured Dialogue		
<b>Fourth Step</b>	Agenda 2000-Reinforced Pre-accession Strategy	European Conference		
		Accession Negotiation Process		
		Accession Process	Accession Negotiations	
			Screening of the Acquis	
			Review Procedure	
			Reinforced Preaccession Strategy	Europe Agreements
				Accession Partnerships
				Pre-accession Aid and PHARE



These three elements - identity change, stability and EU/security regime influence - are therefore not only closely inter-related but also mutually constitutive. There could be no identity change without stability or without the regime's influence; stability itself was a product of both security regime existence and progressive identity transformation; and regime's survival and functioning was possible only due to the success of the identity change process. The next sections will further explore the mechanisms of this complex interdependence.

#### 4. The Western Genesis of Norms

EU and, at a more general level, Western values transformed CEE identities within a transfer process following the next diffusion mechanism:

*Western constitutive norms (international)  
regulative norms CEE constitutive norms*

I will first address the earlier part of this process, the creation of (international) regulative norms on the basis of Western constitutive norms, *id est* on the basis of Western identities. These identities, whose fundamentals are democracy and capitalism, were very well defined at the level of state-society complexes. However, in 1989 this was not the case for the European Community itself.

One might say that even today things are not much better and, short of a comprehensive European Constitution, the European Union's identity remains a matter of debate. But before Maastricht, despite the modest progress due to the Single European Act, EC legal texts were only superficially touching the question of democracy. They could not yet provide the set of regulative norms needed to transform the East.

This serious problem could nevertheless be solved due to the fact that EC/EU did not act alone: it or rather its CEE-oriented activities, and essentially the Europe agreements, were a part of the CEE security regime. In the framework of this regime, it was the CSCE that had formally defined a set of norms to be "exported" eastwards.

These norms originated in the famous Helsinki Decalogue, itself inspired by UN values. In 1975, Cold War made its implementation uncertain. Fifteen years later, in a completely modified international context, the same principles were much more attractive.

Nevertheless, with the exception of the seventh principle, stating the respect of human rights, this was a normative instrument exclusively focusing on European stability. That is why the 1990 Charter of Paris was used to add an important update: two new provisions, concerning democracy and market economy, allowing the creation of an effective set of (regulative) norms perfectly reflecting Western constitutive norms.

This new normative apparatus was diffused in CEE by the CSCE itself, by the other components of the security regime - both Europe Agreements and PfP texts explicitly refer to the respect of Helsinki Final Act principles and Charter of Paris provisions (Flynn and Farrell 1999: 509) - and, at a general level, by all Western organizations, states and NGOs interacting with CEE.

Its complex structure, combining the "classical democracy + capitalism" elements with the security-related Helsinki principles, provided an ideological and normative basis not only for the internal change of CEE state-society complexes but also for the transformation of CEE intra-regional relations. Transition towards democracy and market economy was to be protected by the stability insured by the security regime; and this regime's success was to be facilitated by the above-mentioned transition.

#### 5. The Eastern Assimilation of Western Norms

I shall now address the second part of the norms transfer process: the transformation of Western-originated regulative norms into CEE constitutive norms. As already mentioned, the approach I adopt is based on Wendt's sociological constructivism. Basically, under the pressure of their international environment, CEE state-society complexes were subject to a learning process. On one hand, this transformed their identities; on another, the identity change helped further transform the international (regional) environment.

This complex phenomenon respects the following scheme:

*(Western inspired) international/European environment creation of norms importation interiorization identity change creation/development of the regime*

As we have already seen, the creation of norms (that is the transformation of Western constitutive norms into pan-European regulative norms) took place within the CSCE. Their diffusion was insured mainly by the newly created structures of the CEE security regime. We might add that, mostly due to their conditionality, the Europe Agreements were the most efficient instrument of this normative transfer.

The next stage, interiorization and identity change, took place at the level of state-society complexes. It was greatly helped by the post-communist identity vacuum and the consequent need of a new system of values. But the Western norms were hardly the only candidate. Two rival systems of values were in the race: ultra-nationalism and (neo-) communism-inspired authoritarianism.

In fact, out of the 27 post-communist states, only the 10 members of the security regime succeeded in



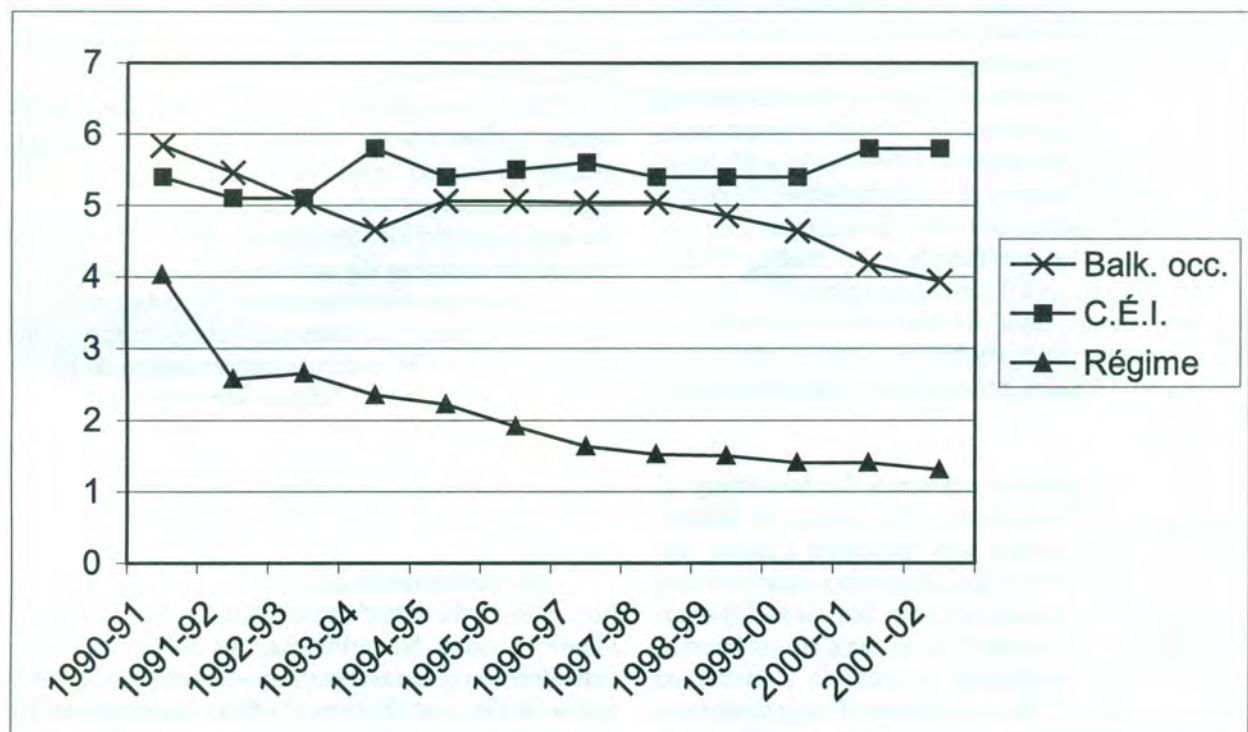
adopting Western norms. The identity change of the remaining 17 countries (Western Balkans and CIS) was not Western-inspired. This can be clearly demonstrated using Freedom House's annual 'Freedom in the World Country Ratings'.

For each country, these ratings express citizens' degree of freedom computed on the basis of political rights and civil liberties evaluation. In other words, they are related to the system of values associated to the political system of the respective country and therefore illustrate the degree of Western-inspired identity transformation of its state-society complex.

The ratings range from 1 (absolute freedom) to 7 (no freedom). A country is free if it scores between 1 and 2.5, partially free between 3 and 5.5 and not free between 5.5 and 7. The average regional ratings for Western Balkans, CIS and the security regime for 1990-2002 are illustrated in graph No.1:

non-democratic trends: not only the average was, for most of the period, on the bad side of the 5.5 limit, but in 2000 it started to worsen. If one might hope that, one day, the Balkans reach the regime's present level (Croatia is a good example), this doesn't seem to be the case for most of the former Soviet republics.

This distribution and especially the enormous difference among members of the regime and the rest of former communist countries confirm the relation between the Western norms assimilation and the membership of the CEE security regime. It is within this regime and only there that those norms and values were assimilated by the population and the political system. Outside the regime, values of a different nature still predominate and political systems were able to preserve their oppressive nature due to the legitimacy provided by nationalism or neo-communism.



Graph No.1

Freedom House freedom ratings - average regional ratings for Western Balkans, CIS and the security regime, 1990-2002

The differences among the three regions are obvious. The average for the regime's member countries rapidly decreased to values typical of the "free countries" category, continuously improved and came very close to the Western Europe level (1.2 in comparison to 1.1). On the contrary, the other two regions preserved average ratings close to the limit separating "partly free" and "free" countries. Western Balkans, marked by the nationalism associated with the Yugoslav secession war, started very late a progress that brought them in 2002 at the level the regime had had eleven years earlier. Things are even worse in CIS, where neo-communism, nationalism and feudal (if not even tribal) traditions combined to reinforce

Next, I return to the scheme of CEE identity transformation. Its last part is about the effects of this change on the international/regional environment. More precisely, while Western Balkans and CIS associated non-Western systems of values with military instability, countries having interiorized Western norms added to their internal identity change an external one directly linked to the stability component illustrated by the Helsinki Decalogue.

Since 1989, there was absolutely no military tension between countries characterized by the adoption of Western norms. This helped create a stable, pacific regional environment favoring the further development of the security regime. In turn, the regime



helped reinforce the pacific trend, thus protecting the transformation process within the respective states.

## 6. A Voyage through the Three Cultures of Anarchy

One of Wendt's important contributions to the study of international system's evolution is his theory concerning "the three cultures of anarchy". Following this approach, there can be an evolution (not mandatory but at least unidirectional, except for exogenous shock) between the three possible "cultures of anarchy": from Hobbes (enemies) to Locke (rivals) and then towards Kant (friends). The existence of a Kantian culture does not mean absolute harmony: all three cultures share three degrees of internalization of the norms (by force, price and legitimacy), which simultaneously influence international relations.

Since 1989, CEE has followed exactly this trajectory. Acting under the pressure of factors related to constraint, interest and legitimacy, CEE states found themselves in a continuous identity transformation, which made them evolve from the Hobbesian anarchy (the security vacuum of 1989-90) to a Lockean culture (the CEE security regime) preparing the recent passage to the Kantian culture of the enlarged EU.

This evolution was largely influenced by the EU and especially by its Europe Agreements. But it could have not been so rapid without the contribution of other structures and above all without the norm genesis and diffusion process that took place within CSCE.

A logical question envisions the possibility of extending this evolution to other areas. Of course, Bulgaria, Romania and, very probably, Croatia, are already on their way. In fact, Bulgaria's main problem is the link Brussels sees between Sofia's and Bucharest's accession. In contrast, Romania's laggardness in completing the negotiation process is a matter of serious concern. If the conclusion of negotiations in 2004 is missed, Bucharest might have to wait for some more years. And, given the extreme efficiency of Zagreb's efforts towards accession, one could even take into consideration a Romania-Croatia simultaneous enlargement sometime in 2009-2011. Still, the point is that, even in Romania, the identity change is following its course in the good direction. Speed might be unsatisfactory, but this is a secondary matter.

Turkey, on the other hand, does not seem to follow. Instead of assimilating Western norms, its society is more and more attracted by Islamic values. Of course, one might claim that Turkish Islamists are not fundamentalist and should be seen as a Muslim equivalent of Christian-Democrats. Indeed, no anti-democratic political action can be pointed out. But this is at least in part due to Turkish military pressure and to the EU conditionality. Furthermore, the question is not if that society's transformation is from

secular towards fundamentalist Islamic values or towards moderate Islamic ones. The question is if Turkey's identity change is due to the assimilation of the Western democratic system of values. As this is not the case, there is an evolution that clearly distances Turkish society from the CEE pattern and, consequently, makes improbable its admission into the EU.

The Western Balkans (Croatia excepted) are in no better situation. In Serbia, ultra-nationalist and anti-Western views are still predominant. It might take a generation to change that. Bosnia and Kosovo are international protectorates, which have to become real states before even thinking about the EU accession. Albania and Macedonia, while in a better position, also need huge improvements of their internal situation. Overall, most of the region is highly unprepared to follow the CEE pattern of identity change. Still, it has a tremendous advantage: the proximity of the EU and its involvement are slowly pushing things in the good direction. It might be long, but the final result can be positive.

The Commonwealth of Independent States seems, on the contrary, unable to follow a similar trajectory. Its limited democratic or clearly authoritarian regimes cannot provide the framework required by a Western-inspired identity change. Therefore, official statements claiming the political will - or interest - to create conditions for a (remote) EU enlargement in that region cannot be taken into consideration. One might say that CIS external border seems to be the "natural limit" of the EU expansion.

## 7. Conclusions

The fundamental element of the EU-CEE relation (and of the latter's absorption by the former) is identity change. Nevertheless, this change has to be considered in close association with regional stability and with the contribution of other organizations besides EU. Western constitutive norms generated similar CEE constitutive norms through the intermediation of international regulative norms created and transmitted in the framework of a CEE security regime whose components were CSCE/OSCE, EU's European Agreement and NATO's PfP.

Only ex-communist state-society complexes having successfully completed this identity transformation were able to migrate from the Hobbesian anarchy (the security vacuum of 1989-90) to a Lockean culture (the CEE security regime) and then to the Kantian culture of EU. Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia will soon follow the same trajectory. But the remaining Western Balkans might need a generation to imitate them while Turkey and the Commonwealth of Independent States, sharing different systems of values, are unlikely candidates for the future EU enlargement. ■



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## NOTES

For these authors, "identities (..) are prescriptive representations of political actors themselves and of relationships to each other" (Kowert et Legro 1996: 453).

Risse-Kappen defines norms as "collective expectations of proper behavior for a given identity" (Risse-Kappen 1996: 368).

For a complete presentation of this regime see Tudoroiu (2003).

I. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty.

II. Refraining from the threat or use of force.

III. Inviolability of frontiers.

IV. Territorial integrity of States.

V. Peaceful settlement of disputes.

VI. Non-intervention in internal affairs.

VII. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including

the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

VIII. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

IX. Cooperation among States.

X. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law. (CSCE 1975: 1a)

All data was found at [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

EU's influence took all these forms, especially if one regards its conditionality policy towards CEE. PfP was closer to the first two factors while CSCE/OSCE exclusively used the legitimacy component.

The title of a book on this subject can be quoted as a good intuitive description of the situation: "Slowly, towards Europe" (Tismaneanu and Mihaies 2000).